



The brother, the djinn, and the passing of time

Dominique Casajus

► To cite this version:

Dominique Casajus. The brother, the djinn, and the passing of time. Research in African Literatures, 1984, 15 (2), pp.218-237. halshs-01350701

HAL Id: halshs-01350701

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01350701>

Submitted on 1 Aug 2016

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial - NoDerivatives| 4.0 International License

The brother, the djinn, and the passing of time

Dominique Casajus

Paper published in: *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 15, N° 2, Special Issue on African Oral Narrative (Summer 1984), pp. 218-237

A series of tales collected between 1976 and 1980 in northern Niger, in the course of anthropological fieldwork on Tuareg social relations, convinced me of the importance of the brother-sister relationship in Tuareg oral literature, an importance reflecting the privileged position the relationship occupies in the social network. In order to illustrate this proposition, I have selected two stories because they not only raise key sociological issues, but also constitute interesting Tuareg versions of tales widely distributed in the Sahel-Maghreb region and in other parts of the world.

This study¹ will essentially focus on “Teshewa”, collected in February 1980 from Ghaisha Ult Khamed, of the Iberdiyanan tribe, the *imghad* of the Kel Ferwan² Tuareg who are nomads west of Agadez. I will examine a second, “Young girl kidnapped by a djinn”, collected from numerous individuals in the same region, only in terms of the questions raised by the first.

*Teshewa*³

A young girl named Teshewa has a father, mother, younger brother, older brother, and sister-in-law, the wife of her older brother. She habitually washes her hair in her older brother's copper basin. One day before leaving on his voyage, he washes his basin and says: “I will marry whoever washes her hair in my basin during my absence, even if she is my mother.” Following her brother's departure, Teshewa continues washing her hair in the basin even though her mother warns her against it. One of her hairs winds itself around the basin's handle. Following his return, the brother finds the hair, knows that someone has used his basin, and learns that it is Teshewa. The marriage contract is immediately drawn

¹ Previous versions of this article were presented orally in G. Calame-Griaule's seminar on oral literature and at a meeting of the Oral Literature Section of the E.R.A. 246. In developing my analysis, I particularly benefited from detailed commentaries made by G. Calame-Griaule, Ch. Seydou, and B. Biebuyck, to whom I am indebted. This article is an edited and translated version of “Le Frere, le djinn et le temps qui passe,” *Cahiers de Littérature Orale*, 12 (1983). This translation is by Brunhilde Biebuyck.

² Kel Ferwan is the name of a confederation of tribes composed of one noble and several commoner (*imghad*) tribes. I have written a brief portrait of Ghaisha Ult Khamed in “Un Salon littéraire chez les Touaregs,” *Cahiers de Littérature Orale*, 11 (1982), 177-178.

³ I published the complete tuareg text of this tale and its French translation in my book *Peau d'Âne et autres contes Touaregs*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1985 (note added to the online version).

up and the wedding takes place that night. In the morning twilight before sunrise Teshewa leaves the bridal tent and goes away.⁴

She walks for a long time, finds a *tenela* (*Sclerocarya birrea*), climbs onto it and transforms herself into a bird. Her kin lose hope of ever finding her, but one day, seeing her younger brother herding sheep in the distance, she calls out. They spend the day together. She delouses him and asks him to return the following day with scissors, a knife, and a comb so that she can dress his hair. He does as he is told. She tells him to keep the flap end of his boubou on his head⁵ so that no one will see that his hair has been dressed.

When he returns to the encampment, his kin who are surprised at his garb, forcefully uncover his head, and try in vain to know who had dressed his hair. The following day they follow him and thus discover the tree where Teshewa is perched. His kin had brought a golden basin filled with water; everyone offers her water in turn, saying: "Teshewa, Teshewa, here is some water, drink." She answers them one after the other, saying: "My father-father-in-law, I don't want any water, drink it yourself;" "my mother-mother-in-law, I don't want any water, drink it yourself." She also addresses in turn "my older brother-husband," "my younger brother-brother-in-law," "my sister-in-law-cowife."⁶ In short, she refuses to come down from the tree. Her kin chop down the tree and grab her (she is still a bird). They put her inside a tunic pocket, and she begins to grow bigger; in succession she is put inside bigger and bigger leather bags, and finally she is placed inside the stomach of a she-ass (although the tale does not state it specifically, the activities in which she engages lead us to believe she then is transformed into a young girl). Every day she goes to the well, waits for the people to leave, leaves her she-ass, waters her sheep, reenters her she-ass, and returns to the encampment in this way.

The amenokal's⁷ son suspects something in this she-ass. He climbs a tree in order to spy on her. Teshewa arrives, leaves the she-ass, and takes off her clothes in order to

⁴ In a Kel Ferwan marriage the nuptial tent, which will subsequently be the couple's abode, is erected near the encampment of the girl's parents. The couple settles there the night of the marriage ceremonies. Before sunrise, they leave to return to the encampments of their own parents and return to their own tent following sunset. A paranymp accompanies them each time (a boy for the husband, a girl for the wife). The tent remains in the same place for seven days; it is empty during the day and occupied at night. After seven days, the couple moves and settles the tent in the encampment of the husband's family.

⁵ The Tuaregs sometimes wear very large boubous and can fold the flap end back onto their head; young people who do not wear the litham voluntarily wear their boubou in this way.

⁶ In the tale this passage is a sort of fixed-form recitative. The passage in which Teshewa refuses the water offered by her kin also is sung in fixed form. Numerous Tuareg tales contain this type of refrain, sung or recited. In some ways they are the tale's emblem and a good storyteller should not omit them. It is reasonable to postulate that an important aspect of the tale is to be found in these passages. In fact, we will see that these two fixed form passages correspond to one another and represent the essentials of the tale.

⁷ The term *amenokal* designates the chief of a noble tribe who does not recognize the supremacy of any other noble tribe. There are tribes that exist in the orbit of a much more powerful tribe without becoming vassals; their chief cannot be an *amenokal*. In Agadez the term also designates the sultan; the Agadez sultan does not have any equivalents anywhere else in the Tuareg world and his role is

bathe. The boy steals her clothes and returns to his tree. Returning from her bath, the young girl says, "Who took my undergarment? He should return it to me, and he will see a way of wearing an undergarment that is more beautiful than his mother's." He gives it to her. She thus enumerates in succession all her clothing and jewelry, saying each time: "He who will return my pagne [loincloth], my tunic, my bracelet, ... will see a way of wearing it that is more beautiful than his mother's, sister's, cousin's." He returns all her clothing to her, comes down from the tree, places her behind him on his camel, and takes her back with him. On the way, she pretends that she left her bracelet behind, backtracks, and reenters her sheass. Turning his head, the young man only sees a she-ass. He tells his kin that he wants to marry this she-ass. Everyone tries in vain to convince him to the contrary. The wedding is celebrated and the she-ass is led into the bridal tent. When night falls, Teshewa comes out of her she-ass.

In the morning twilight the *amenokal*'s envoys come to learn the news, and then the *amenokal* himself arrives. The young girl they see before them is so beautiful that they faint in shock. She reanimates them by sprinkling them with sweat from her forehead. The *amenokal* falls in love with his daughter-in-law and decides to kill his son.

Seven days after the wedding⁸ he asks his son to accompany him on a voyage. Arriving at a well, he finds a pretext to have his son enter it and then abandons him. The latter scratches his head and discovers the dates his wife had placed in his hair when she braided it. He eats the dates and throws away the pits. One of them germinates and becomes a palm tree that he climbs, leaving the well in this way. Upon returning home, he finds his wife (the story implies that she has remained faithful to him). He subsequently succeeds in killing his father by making him fall into a well whose opening he had hidden with a cover and at the bottom of which he had lit a fire.

Preliminary Remarks

At first sight, this tale can be divided into three parts, a division that is only useful from an analytical perspective. Since my intention is to identify its unity, I will be obliged to go beyond these subdivisions. The first part involves an incestuous marriage. A young girl married to her brother seeks refuge at the top of a tree from which she is forcefully dislodged by her kin. In the second part a young man who has hidden himself in a tree returns the articles of clothing he had stolen from the young girl one by one and then marries her. In the third part father and son fight for possession of the young woman.

principally religious. By mentioning the *amenokal*, the narrator does not refer to a precise institution but simply wants to designate a powerful man—he is the king of the "fairytale."

⁸ The tale states: "When a period of seven days had elapsed for the son." This is the period of seven days following the wedding during which the newlyweds do not spend the day in the tent (see note 3). If the marriage had taken place near Teshewa's encampment, which does not appear to be the case, it is at this moment that the *amenokal*'s son would return to his father's encampment with Teshewa. Whatever the case, it is the end of a period marked by numerous prohibitions after which the young couple begins to settle into its new social status.

It is interesting to note at this juncture that the last two parts of “Teshewa” are almost exact replicas of a tale collected by G. Calame-Griaule near In Gall,⁹ situated very near Kel Ferwan. In her analysis, Calame-Griaule says the tale belongs to the family of tales involving “animal wives” (AT 400) and, more particularly, to the group in which this theme is associated with another theme, “the husband persecuted because of his beautiful wife” (AT 465). Needless to say, we can make the same remarks about our tale. On the other hand, the first two parts of “Teshewa” are very similar to another well-known European story involving an animal wife, “The Dress of Gold, of Silver, and of Stars,” (AT 510B).¹⁰ “Teshewa”, in which the incestuous father of AT 510B has become a brother, seems to be a synthesis of these two kindred tales that usually appear separately in international folktale tradition.

The Tree Theme

At this point it is useful to refer to V. Görög-Karady’s article on the tree theme in African tales¹¹ because it includes a series of tales, collected in the Sahel-Maghreb region, that are clearly related to the first part of “Teshewa”.

In one of these, collected among the Songhay, a young girl tells her family that she only wants to marry her brother. She is chased out of the village and seeks refuge in a baobab tree where her sister finds her. Her family gathers at the foot of the tree and asks her to come down. She only consents on the condition that her brother accept her hand in marriage. He pretends to accept her offer and she comes down, but he does not keep his promise and the young girl dies after three days.

We find the same motifs here as in the first part of “Teshewa”: incestuous marriage (realized in one case and only desired by one of the two possible partners in the other); the sister seeking refuge in a tree; the discovery by a member of her family (brother or sister); the family gathering at the foot of the tree and pleading for her to come down (Teshewa’s parents offer her something to drink in the hopes of grabbing the bird she had become).

In the same article by Görög-Karady we read the following tale collected among the Hausa (my paraphrase): The daughter of a chief only loves her brother. She behaves toward him as she would toward a potential husband; that is to say, she does not call him by his name. The brother decides to remedy this state of affairs. He goes to the river where his sister bathes with her friends, picks up their clothes, climbs a tree, and declares that he will only return the garments if they call him by name. All except his sister do as they are

⁹ Cf., G. Calame-Griaule, “Peau d’anesse,” *Cahiers d’Études Africaines*, 73-76, 1-4 (1981), 501-515. The closeness of this tale to ours perhaps explains a curious detail in the latter. When the *amenokal*’s son puts her on the back of his camel, Teshewa pretends to have lost her bracelet and returns in order to introduce herself anew into her she-ass skin. In the “Peau d’anesse” story, the young girl originally is a she-ass; she only becomes the wife following a series of adventures and regressions to her previous state (p. 502). Teshewa’s return to her she-ass state seems to be a trace of this incident, but it has lost its function.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 507-508.

¹¹ V. Görög-Karady, “L’arbre justicier,” in *Le Thème de l’arbre dans les contes africains*, ed. G. Calame-Griaule (Paris: SELAF, 1970), pp. 23-62.

told. The water begins to rise dangerously and she, in turn, is forced to call her brother by name. From then on she can no longer consider him as a potential husband.

Here again we find the tree and the incest theme present in the first part of “Teshewa”. This tale, however, also recalls the second part in which Teshewa bathes herself and the amenokal’s son steals her clothing and he hides himself in a tree. In order to regain possession of her clothing Teshewa says that she wears her undergarment more beautifully than his mother’s mother, the pagne more beautifully than his mother, and so forth. This statement implies that she does not wear her garments as his mother’s mother, mother, and so on do. In other words, she announces: “Look at me and be convinced that I am neither your mother nor your mother’s mother,” in short, “I am not your kin.”

As we can see in the following table, the Hausa story and the second part of our tale are inversely symmetrical.

HAUSA	TESHEWA
Brother-sister; brother in a tree, sister is bathing.	Man-woman, man in a tree, woman is bathing.
Brother obliges sister to behave as his sister and not as his potential spouse.	Woman convinces man she is not his kin and is therefore marriageable.
Brother returns clothing to her.	Man returns clothing to her.
Conclusion: They were not married.	Conclusion: They were married.

The development of this sequence, in turn, clarifies the first part in which Teshewa is in a tree and her kin offer water to her, hoping that she will come down. She answers “father-father-in-law, mother-mother-in-law, brother-husband, I don’t want water.” In other words, she implies: “I am both your in-law and your kin.” The clothing motif is not present in this episode, whereas it is in the tale involving coming down from a tree. In fact, the first motif is secondary and when it is present, its function is to accentuate a symmetry whose axis is the “coming down from the tree” motif. In this respect, the following parallels can be drawn between the first two parts of “Teshewa” and the Hausa and Songhay tales:

First part: Teshewa refuses to come down from the tree because she is both the kin and affine of those who await her below.

Second part: The amenokal’s son comes down from the tree when it is clear that the young girl standing below is not his kin but a possible affine.

Songhai tale: The sister comes down from the tree when her brother agrees to marry her; she dies in the end.

Hausa tale: The brother comes down from the tree when his sister behaves as his sister.

The Confusion between Affinity and Consanguinity

As the preceding table demonstrates, the tree in this series of tales or episodes is always brought into play in the following sequence: A asks B to come down from a tree; B comes down or does not come down. He only comes down when the kinship relationship with A is defined without ambiguity; he does not come down when he cannot choose between two possible attitudes. Coming down or not coming down from the tree means being able or not being able to choose between affinity and consanguinity (in the Songhay tale the girl comes down but this leads to her death because she has made a wrong choice). Climbing the tree could be seen as expressing passage to an interrogative mode. The question that is raised is “Are you an affine or a consanguine relative?”

Ultimately the tale underscores the idea that the very structuring of the social tissue is founded on the distinction between affinity and consanguinity. Incest, presented here as a case in point, would in effect abolish this distinction. In doing so, it would serially abolish all distinctions that are the very basis of social life: If Oedipus marries Jocasta who will the child of their union be? Oedipus’s brother or son?¹² This point is also subtly evident in another detail in the tale: Since she has used her brother’s copper basin illicitly (thereby overqualifying the brother-sister relationship), Teshewa cannot have recourse to the golden basin offered by her kin; even the licit use of this kinship relationship (to drink from the same basin) is no longer possible for her.

By means of reasoning ad absurdum, the tale identifies the logical consequences of premises that contradict customary social life. This logic appears most clearly in the sequence involving the tree, but it had already surfaced in previous episodes, which announce and prepare them, forming a sort of crescendo movement. Following her first wedding night, Teshewa flees at morning twilight. In reality, it is at this time that newly weds part from one another and leave their bridal tent to regain the encampment of their own kin. In this case, the encampment of Teshewa’s parents is also that of her husband’s and she cannot part from him as she should. She can only flee. This flight and its accompanying metamorphosis into a bird thus seem to be direct consequences of the incestuous marriage. Later, she delouses her younger brother and dresses his hair, a token of affection frequently reserved for (and even expected for) a brother-in-law. Although brothers and sisters are supposed to have great affection for one another (see below), and perhaps because of this, a sister cannot dress her brother’s hair or delouse him. A wife can treat her husband in this way, but any public demonstration of affection between husband and wife is not permitted. Through these episodes (the tree episode being the climax), the tale thus announces that it addresses itself not so much to the question of incest in and of itself (about which it is very discreet) but to its consequences: the confusion between in-laws and kin.

The first two parts of “Teshewa” clarify each other, forming panels of a diptych; at first sight, the third part seems to be added on, but I will demonstrate that this is not the case and that it, in fact, is a response to the first two parts.

¹² Sophocles lays the emphasis on this in his play *Oedipus the King* (see Vernant, J.-P. 2001 c [1970]. « Ambiguïté et renversement. Sur la structure énigmatique d’«Édipe-Roi» », in Vernant, J.-P. & P. Vidal-Naquet (ed.), *Édipe et ses mythes*, Paris, Éditions Complexe, 2001 : 54-78. [note added to the online version]

The Father and Son

In the third part the well plays a role similar to that of the tree in the first two parts. The amenokal first abandons his son at the bottom of a well, then the latter reciprocates. For the narrator and auditors, the father's attitude is condemnable, whereas the son's vengeance (despite its cruelty) represents a return to a certain degree of social norm: If sons marry after their father, they should also die after them.

At the beginning of the tale, the tree appeared two times. In one case, the heroine could not (or did not want to) come down from it; in the other, the hero could come down. The well appears twice in the third part, and each time a man throws a relative into it. In the first case, the victim succeeds in climbing out; in the second case, he cannot. The son's temporary stay at the bottom of the well corresponds to a socially unacceptable situation; the father's definitive stay corresponds to a return to the social norm. Similarly, in the first two parts, it is initially socially impossible for Teshewa to come down from her tree whereas for the amenokal's son, it means that a socially acceptable marriage is possible. We can compare occurrences of the tree and the well in the following way:

<i>Situation</i>	<i>Tree</i>	<i>Well</i>
Socially unacceptable situation	Climbing down is impossible	Climbing out is possible
Socially acceptable situation (return to social norm)	Climbing down is possible	Climbing out is impossible

One detail accentuates the symmetry highlighted between tree and well: It is once again a tree that makes it possible for the amenokal's son to climb out of the well; climbing a tree and leaving a well are thus equivalent. This third occurrence of a tree does not have the same meaning as the first two; unlike the first two, it does not represent a form of interrogation. In some ways this motif is neutral; only its form is important. It does not make sense in and of itself, but it highlights the symmetry existing between the other episodes.

This formal symmetry corresponds to the analogy existing between the sociological content of the tree and the well episodes. The first part of the tale involves a confusion between two terms –affine and consanguine– that should remain distinct; the second part involves an inversion of two terms –senior and junior (the father refuses to accept his status as a man older than his son). We could venture to say that the opposition between affinity and consanguinity is spatial (a consanguine relative is nearer than an affine and consequently marrying someone in this category implies marrying close by rather than far away) and that the opposition between senior and junior is temporal. In fact, reference to temporality is not absent from the beginning of the tale; this reference will become clearer when I compare “Teshewa” with “The girl kidnapped by a djinn”, in which reference to temporality becomes more explicit.

The opposition made between tree and well is echoed in a minor way in the two passages in which Teshewa braids a man's hair. The first man is her brother whom she

treats as her brother-in-law (in a long episode preceding the first tree scene), a deed directly related to the fact that she cannot come down from the tree. She subsequently dresses her husband's hair with all the requisite discretion (since it is mentioned only after the fact). As we saw, among the Tuareg, demonstration of affection between spouses cannot be made publicly whereas a woman has the right to demonstrate a certain public tenderness for her brother-in-law.

The last part and the ensemble formed by the first two thus are symmetrically related. The tale cannot, however, be reduced to the juxtaposition of two symmetrical sections. Teshewa first transforms herself into a bird and then into a she-ass. The bird's species is not specified; the narrator uses the generic term *egejid*. This bird is perched on a *tenela*, a tree that does not exist on Kel Ferwan soil but that is familiar because its wood is used for certain kitchen utensils sold in the marketplace in Agadez. Teshewa thus metamorphoses herself into an unidentified bird living in a faraway country. This metamorphosis, therefore, puts her in a state of extreme indeterminacy, which is superimposed onto her social indeterminacy: she is both and at the same time an unidentified bird and a girl whose status (kin or affine) cannot be identified. A series of successive transformations lead her to a state of she-ass, a domestic animal (which, for her, corresponds to a lesser degree of indeterminacy), then to a woman. The sequence of these transformations is graduated: Teshewa is first enclosed within skin containers (bags) that become bigger and bigger, then finally in the she-ass's belly, which, after all, is also a type of skin container. It seems that she definitely leaves her she-ass state following her second wedding night, which corresponds to her metamorphosis into a bird following her first wedding night. Successive metamorphoses weaken the effect of the first one (which, right after her stay in an animal belly, seems to be a kind of rebirth) and can cancel the effects of the abnormal one and transform the young girl back to her full human state.¹³ These series of transformations can be represented as follows:

Incestuous marriage $\Rightarrow \Rightarrow$ undefined bird $\Rightarrow \Rightarrow$ bird in a bag $\Rightarrow \Rightarrow$ young girl in a bag
 \Downarrow
 Woman $\Leftarrow \Leftarrow$ (normal marriage) $\Leftarrow \Leftarrow$ young girl inside a domestic animal

We noted that the beginning and end of the tale oppose the themes of the tree and the well. We can also point out that at the beginning the young girl's behavior is asocial whereas at the end it is social and even positive since she is responsible for saving her husband from the well. This is an additional symmetrical element between the beginning and the end, but the narrative cannot go from one attitude to the other without passing through a series of intermediary states, for the distance is too great between her asocial behavior (incest) and her positive social behavior (rescuing). This gradation thus functions like an obligatory bridge between the two symmetrical sections; it is the axis around which the tale unfolds its symmetrical games and which creates its unity.

¹³ For this remark, as well as its subsequent development, I am indebted to Calame-Griaule, "Peau d'Ânesse."

The Young Girl Kidnapped by a Djinn

I collected only one complete version of “Teshewa”. The other versions with which I am familiar do not contain the incestuous episode, and other innocuous adventures lead to her transformation into a bird.¹⁴ It is surely dangerous to base commentaries on only one version; I have judged it feasible only insofar as variants of certain episodes of Teshewa exist in neighbouring societies (without which my argument would have been difficult to make) and because this tale seems to be the mirror image of another that exists in numerous variants in Tuareg country. Through a kind of reasoning *ad absurdum* Teshewa tests the hypothesis of abnormal endogamy; the tale I will now analyze tests the hypothesis of abnormal exogamy.

A young girl is kidnapped by a *djinn* (the Tamacheq *aljin*, derived from the Arabic; the term *kel-esuf*, “those of the bush,” is also used). Whereas certain traits unite the Tuareg *jnoun* (pl. for *djinn*) and the Arabic *jnoun* as they are described in the Koran and the classics, there is one trait that profoundly distinguishes one from the other. The Tuaregs affirm that the *jnoun* are the dead and add that those who become *jnoun* eternally haunt the tent in which they receive their final funeral rites.

It is important here to bear in mind that when she marries, a woman receives her mother’s tent. More precisely, her mother gives her the principal elements of her tent and keeps the others for herself. The two women, therefore, each live in a tent resulting from a split of the one tent. The Tuareg insist on the proximity, almost the identity, of these two tents. A woman and her daughter thus live and die in two tents that are not completely distinguished one from the other, whereas a man is born and marries in two separate tents that are viewed as quite distinct from one another. In principle, he dies in the second one, which he will haunt following his death. I will return to this point at the end of the study.

The Tuareg Versions of the Tale

Following are summaries of the principal versions, also collected between 1976 and 1980 from Kel Ferwan Tuaregs in the region around Agadez.

Version 1: There are several brothers and a very beautiful sister. One day when they all are at the well, a *djinn* hidden at the bottom grabs their scoop and only lets it go in exchange for the promise of their sister. He takes the young girl and before setting off, he asks her, “Which do you prefer? That I eat you or that I become your father?” She chooses that he become her father. On the way, he regularly asks her: “Look, look, what do you see?” The young girl responds: “I see a beautiful encampment surrounded by camels (or else by horses or goats or other animals, the animals change with each new answer).” The *djinn* invariably answers: “In our place it is still more beautiful.” They finally arrive at the *djinn*’s very ugly abode. One of her brothers goes off in search of his sister together with one of his slaves; en route both men come upon encampments where the brother exclaims, “Me, my camel, my saddle, my slave, what on earth is more beautiful than all this?” “All

¹⁴ In one of these versions the young girls, jealous of the beauty of one of their companions, throw her into a well. As she falls, she is transformed into a bird that perches on a neighbouring tree. The tale is then identical to the preceding one. It is interesting to note that the motif of the jealous girls can be found in the next tale that we will analyze.

that is quite beautiful,” he is told, “but ten years before you came a young girl who surpassed you in beauty passed through here” (then nine, eight . . . the number of years diminish as the hero advances). Each time he leaves an encampment the brother sings: “Oh, Oh Khayatan [the name of his sister], where are you, you whose lips are so dark [a sign of beauty among the Tuareg].” The narrator specifies that he cannot forget his sister’s beauty. When the brothers arrive at the sister’s tent, she hides them under her bed. Following the return of the *djinn*, the brother amuses himself by pricking him with a blacksmith’s awl. Thinking he is bit by an ant, the *djinn* cannot fall asleep. Later in the same night, the young girl asks him where his soul is. He answers: “Go to a gazelle [in this version the gazelle is near a river], remove one of its horns by beating it with a stick; inside this horn is a bag . . . [and so on up to ten bags]. In the tenth there is a box, in which there is a box, in which there is a box . . . [up to ten boxes]. In the tenth box you will find a hair. That is my soul.” She follows his advice, finds the hair and breaks it. The *djinn* dies and she returns home.

Version 2: A group of young girls who are jealous of their friend’s beauty abandon her alone in the bush while they are picking wild berries. She is accosted by a *djinn* who tells her: “Which do you prefer? That I eat you or that I marry you?” She prefers getting married. There follows a long voyage similar to the one in version 1. Her oldest “intelligent” brother visits his sister without the *djinn*’s knowledge and then returns home. Her youngest “stupid” brother, in turn, comes to visit and, on the way home he is surprised by the *djinn* who kills him. Then the young girls kill the *djinn* in the same way as in the preceding version.

Version 3: Young girls leave to pick wild berries. Out of naughtiness one of them separates herself from the group; a *djinn* accosts her. She succeeds in escaping from him and regains her mother’s tent, but he catches up with her. Hearing a noise outside, her mother thinks that a sheep is caught in the mats of her tent and orders her daughter to go out and chase it. She does so unwillingly, and the *djinn* grabs her. The rest of the tale is analogous to version 1. The motif of the brother’s laments is attenuated and that of the blacksmith’s awl disappears.

In these three tales the *djinn* behaves like a husband toward the young girl he kidnaps: She cooks for him and they share the same tent and bed. In versions 2 and 3 he is explicitly called her husband (*elis net*, “her man”). In version 1, however, he proposes to become her father, but this does not change in any way his future behavior, which is analogous to that of the other two *jnoun*. I will return to this significant characteristic (the *djinn* being “father” and “husband” simultaneously) at the end of this study.

The Tale in the Berber World

Tales in which a young girl is kidnapped by a monstrous being are not specifically Tuareg. Equivalents can be found elsewhere in the Berber world and even in the international folktale tradition.¹⁵ The Tuareg versions, however, are particular in one aspect

¹⁵ These tales recall those of the “capricious girl,” in which a young woman refuses all suitors that her family proposes to her; she accepts only one suitor who reveals himself to be an animal or monster. In the Tuareg versions, which are different on this point, the young girl never consents to her kidnapping.

that I will examine first. I will merely compare them to their variants in the closest neighbouring groups, for in fact what distinguishes these tales from their closest variants should suffice in establishing their specificity.¹⁶

One version was collected by René Basset in Wargla (Southern Algeria); it reads as follows:¹⁷

A man and his wife had seven sons and one daughter. The daughter leaves with her friends to cut underbrush. She playfully separates herself from her friends and is accosted by an ogre; he lets her leave on the condition that she return. She has no intention of keeping her promise, but he follows her tracks to her home. Her mother orders her to give fire to the stranger who is standing near the door. She does so unwillingly and the ogre grabs her and leaves. Her seven brothers each in turn attempt to deliver her from the ogre but he kills them all. The youngest brother, born after the kidnapping, succeeds in killing the ogre, saving his sister, and resuscitating his seven brothers.

This version thus also involves the kidnapping of a young girl by a semi-human: the word which I translate as ogre is *ghul*, a term derived from Arabic that led to the French word *goule*, and to the English ghoul.¹⁸ In the Arab classics the *ghoul* is akin to the *djinn* from whom he often is not distinguished. To my knowledge this is the closest Berber example of the Tuareg versions. Father J. Riviere related another tale (collected from the Kabyle, northern Algeria) in which a short passage recalls an episode shared by the three Tuareg tales:¹⁹

A man's spouse is kidnapped by an ogre. The man goes off to find her, encounters the ogre and asks him where his destiny lies. "My destiny," answers the ogre, "is in an egg; the egg is in a pigeon; the pigeon is in a she-camel, the she-camel is in the sea." The man digs a hole on the seashore, a she-camel emerges from the waters, falls into the hole. He disembowels it, removes a pigeon, removes an egg from the pigeon; he crushes the egg and the ogre dies.

This is a short passage in a much larger story involving an entirely different subject, but it recalls the successive encasings in the three versions (hair in the box, box in the bag, bag in the horn), particularly in version 1, in which the gazelle whose horn contains the *djinn*'s soul is found either near the sea or a river (sea and river are expressed by the same term in Tamacheq, *egeren*).

¹⁶ Recognizing the particularity of a tale is not without importance. A tale is not a myth and there is a certain degree of arbitrariness in the manner in which it organizes its elements (cf. C. Levi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1973), vol. 2, p. 154). Possibly for this reason a culture can easily borrow tales without bothering to transform them. It is thus important to ask what exactly a given culture does with a tale; that is to say, identify the treatment it can give it and define what is specific to it. This concern, which is superfluous if one undertakes a purely semiological analysis of a tale, cannot be neglected if society is the backdrop of one's study. Teshewa's particularity resides in the fact that it is a synthesis of two distinct tales.

¹⁷ René Basset, "Les Huit frères, leur sœur, et l'ogre (Ouargla)," in *Nouveaux contes berbères* (Paris: Leroux, 1897, pp. 96-102.

¹⁸ In French the word *goule* frequently designates a female demon but *ghul* does not.

¹⁹ Joseph Riviere, *Recueil de contes populaires de la Kabylie et du Djurdjura* (Paris: Leroux, 1882), p. 191.

The similarities between the tale from Wargla and certain Tuareg versions (even in minute details) indicate that we are, in fact, dealing with the same story. As in versions 2 and 3, the young girl encounters a *djinn* (the ogre) while she is picking wild cereals or berries. As in version 3 she playfully separates herself from the group and it is because her mother asks her to leave the house, which she does unwillingly, that the *djinn* can subsequently seize her.

In the tale from Wargla, each of the seven brothers in turn goes in search of his sister and fails. An eighth child, who is born much later and is small but sly, succeeds in killing the ogre. A distant reminder of this motif can be found in version 2: One of the brothers (intelligent) visits his sister and returns without problems; the second (stupid) is killed by the *djinn* on his way home. This motif is also found in “Tom Thumb,” which exists in Tuareg oral literature.

At this point we can speak of a Tuareg form and a Maghrebian form of the same tale. From one to the other, however, there is an important alteration. In the Maghreb versions the brothers actually fight the ogre and one of them kills him. In the brief passage cited from the Kabyle story, it is the husband of the kidnapped woman who confronts the ogre, but in any case, the woman is always rescued by someone. In all the Tuareg versions none of the brothers confronts the *djinn*, and the sister frees herself on her own. Version 1, it is true, contains a trace of combat between a *djinn* and one of the brothers: Hidden under his sister’s bed, the brother amuses himself by pricking the *djinn* with a blacksmith’s awl, but this action is a caricature of combat, a puerile game replacing a true confrontation. The very fact that he uses the tool of a blacksmith (a scorned individual) makes this game all the more ignominious. Similarly, in version 2 the stupid brother is killed when he returns home (when his back is turned) and not when he is confronted by the ogre. It is this absence of confrontation between the brothers and the *djinn* that gives the Tuareg tale its distinctiveness and that will enable me to compare it with “Teshewa”. As we shall see, it actually only partly involves the story of a kidnapping.

Brother-Sister Relationship

In version 1 (as well as in version 3 and in others not cited here) the *djinn* and the young girl cross innumerable countries; before each encampment they come across, he asks: “Look, what do you see?” Each time, she responds: “I see a very beautiful encampment and so on” to which the *djinn* responds: “In my place, it is even more beautiful.” This passage constitutes a kind of song whose couplets the tale-teller repeats. In version 1 (as well as in version 3, to a certain extent) the brother in search of his sister asks the inhabitants of the encampments if they have ever seen anything more beautiful than his retinue. These questions and the answers constitute a sort of recitative that can be seen as a response to the *djinn*’s song, inasmuch as the encampments the brother comes upon are presumably the same as those the *djinn* and the young woman had seen. The recitative can be seen as a response to the song for another reason: In the song comparison is made between the beauty of the encampment seen from far away and the beauty of the encampment who is the goal of the voyage; in the recitative, the inhabitants of the encampments encountered compare the voyager’s beauty to that of the young woman who is the goal of the voyage. Furthermore in version 1, and to a lesser extent in version 3, the brother moans all along his route about the beauty of his lost sister. This passage is sung

and it alternates with questions to the inhabitants posed in the recitative mode. In Tuareg tales these sung or recited passages are very important (see note 6) and an essential aspect of the tale is condensed within them. The tale in question parallels two voyages: one involving a woman and a *djinn* and one involving a brother who travels with his sister in his thoughts. The brother's tenderness toward his sister is emphatically expressed here; in a previous study I analyzed this tenderness as reflecting incestuous sentiments,²⁰ but further discussions with informants did not corroborate my interpretation; they viewed the brother's laments as only a kind of literary device.²¹ In Tuareg tales a brother frequently displays a slightly demonstrative tenderness toward his sister, but this tenderness is pure and it is a trait that is always much appreciated by the audience. Similar episodes appear in tales in which the brother could be even less accused of incestuous sentiments for he brilliantly marries his sister off and he protects her against the schemes of jealous cowives. On the contrary, the incestuous brother in Teshewa is rather brutal. Furthermore, whereas they are rivals in the Maghrebian tales, the brother and *djinn* hardly encounter one another in the Tuareg examples; this absence of rivalry between the brother and the sister's "husband" is another reason why we must not quickly jump to the conclusion that the brother's sentiments are incestuous. The "Young girl kidnapped by a *djinn*" merely presents with much literary affectation a brother-sister couple parallel with a woman-*djinn* couple. Without entering into details, I will simply say that it parallels a normal brother-sister relationship with an abnormal relationship between a woman and a male being. The real argument of the tales lies in this aspect more than in the kidnapping.

Excessive Exogamy and Endogamy

This tale, or family of tales, seems to be the mirror image of "Teshewa". Normal and even positive in the latter, the husband-wife relationship is monstrous in the *djinn* tales. Incestuous in "Teshewa", the brother-sister relationship is normal and even positive in the others. The opposition of these two types of tales is also apparent in certain narrative details, which I have not commented on thus far. In the three versions of the second, a young girl kills the *djinn* by taking one of his hairs; in the first a brother marries his sister because he finds one of her hairs. In version 2 of the second type, on the other hand, a young girl is accosted by a *djinn* because of the jealousy of her friends; in Teshewa it is the father's jealousy that compromises his son's marriage for a period of time. Taking these details into consideration, and arranging the two "tale-types" in chronological order but inverting the temporal axis in both, we obtain the following table:

²⁰ Cf. my thesis, *La tente dans la solitude*, University Paris 7, 1979.

²¹ Even if it is not incestuous, and precisely because it is not, the tenderness between brother and sister is remarkable. In folktales, it reflects the particular closeness between a Tuareg man and his sister, indications of which are to be found, among other places, in the kinship terminology. I am now studying aspects of this closeness.

<i>First Tale</i>	<i>Second Tale</i>
A man takes his sister's hair and this initiates an abnormal endogamous relationship	A woman takes a male being's hair and this ends an abnormal exogamous relationship
Positive wife-husband relationship	Positive brother-sister relationship
Jealousy between men compromises this relationship for a while	Jealousy between young girls breaks this relationship and fuels the other one

Each column in the table not only is symmetrical but is also the inverse of the other one. In one as in the other, the roles played by women and men are inverted. The husband-wife relationship becomes a brother-sister relationship. The manner in which time elapses is also inverted. We should furthermore note that in “Teshewa” a young girl is transformed, whereas in the second tale the *djinn* is a being who has the power (among others) to transform himself. The fact that the hair motif plays an important role in the ensemble constituted by the two types of tales is highlighted by its double occurrence in “Teshewa”, which echoes (inside the same tale) the symmetry of the hair motif between the two types.

These two are strictly opposed to each other; one exposes excessive endogamous and the other exogamous situations. This opposition can be broadened if two facts I have withheld from this analysis are taken into account: Although the *djinn* in version 1 behaves like the girl's husband, he is her “father”; on the other hand, I have mentioned that the Tuareg *jnoun* also are the dead, which distinguishes them from the *ghul* or ogres in the Maghreb tales. We shall see that these two facts are tied to one another.

If the *djinn* is either the husband or father of the young girl (since versions of the tale move indifferently from one status to the other), there must be a point of view that equates these two statuses. Indeed, an equivalence can be found if we recall that the Tuareg tent is transmitted from mother to daughter and that following his death a man (who becomes a *djinn*) haunts the tent in which he died and in which he took his wife. The social position of the tent can be outlined as follows:

$$A = A'$$

$$B = B'$$

$$C = C'$$

A, her daughter B, and her daughter's daughter C are the proprietors of three tents that derive from the split of one tent (that of A). They each represent the successive stages in the destiny of A's tent. In relationship to the latter, A', B', and C', respective husbands of A, B, and C all occupy, or have occupied, the same status: they entered the tent (or its avatars) as husband, coming from another, quite different tent (see above). Let us imagine now that A' is dead and C represents the young girl in the *djinn* tale. C' is her husband, B' her father, and A' a *djinn* who haunts A's tent (from which C's derives). In doing so, we see that in the tale the three statuses are confounded: In real time they succeed one another – a man begins as husband in a tent, he later becomes the father of a girl born in this tent (she will later marry in a tent deriving from this one), and ultimately he will die and haunt the tent as a *djinn*. What lends the tale its marvellous or monstrous aspect is that a certain

degree of power over temporality (the basis of society) disappears. The three successive moments in the destiny of a tent are confounded.

Similarly, marrying one's sister also means refusing the lapsing of time, for social life consists mainly in two basic types of movements: women leave the encampment in which they were born with their tent to settle in their in-law's encampment; a brother leaves his sister's tent to enter as husband in another one. This endless movement is spatial but it is also conceived as measuring the lapsing of time.²²

In the first part of this study, I examined incest from a spatial point of view, noting all the while that the theme was similar to another, more temporal order; this implied a temporal reading of incest that the texts did not specify. Only comparison of "Teshewa" and the *djinn* stories could lead me to this type of reading. The similarity in the subject matter of the two resides at this level. They both involve a game not only with kinship relations but also with temporality. When time stops, "Teshewa" marries her brother; when the order in the succession of social events that constitute time is no longer respected, a *djinn* becomes a young girl's husband or father.

As members of a given society we can sometimes forget that each society creates the time within which it lives. By playing upon time in the same way as they do with kinship relations, these tales force us to remember that a social component exists in one as in the other. By varying these social parameters, the tales demonstrate their importance to social life. Rather than reflecting reality, these tales are controlled distortions of that reality.

²² Cf. my article, "La Tente et le campement chez les Touaregs Kel Ferwan," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 32 (1981), 53-70.